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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000037

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NEW GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO MAKING AHTISAARI
LEGISLATION A TOP PRIORITY

Classified By: COM Tina Kaidanow for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On January 17 COM joined ICOPT head Jonas Jonsson at an all-ministerial meeting convened specifically to urge PM Thaci's new cabinet to make finalization of Ahtisaari Plan legislation and Kosovo's new Constitution a top priority. The meeting, which included all 15 ministers and their deputies, was chaired by deputy PM Hajredin Kuci (PDK) and opened by President Sejdiu and Assembly Speaker Krasniqi, who offered their strong support to the process (note: PM Thaci was in New York for the Security Council session dealing with Kosovo). COM and ICO emphasized the need for dedication of ministerial staff, efficient use of time, and cooperation among political parties, both government and opposition, as well as with minorities in order to ensure well-drafted laws that would be ready for passage shortly after a declaration of independence. Ministers pledged to dedicate all necessary resources to ensure drafting and passage of Ahtisaari-related laws and of the Constitution. The meeting was successful in getting these leaders to agree that these two tasks are a top priority of the government and showing that the U.S. and EU are united in making certain Kosovo is serious about implementing the Ahtisaari Plan. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The Office of the Prime Minister, at the express request of USOP and ICOPT, convened a meeting of all 15 cabinet ministers on January 17 to introduce the top two priorities for the new government: the finalization of Kosovo's new constitution and of Ahtisaari Plan-related legislation, particularly those laws dealing with the Kosovo Serb community. President Sejdiu, Assembly Speaker Krasniqi and the two deputy PMs gave opening statements in support of the process, and promised full cooperation with USOP and ICOPT. (Note: PM Thaci was in New York for a UNSC session on Kosovo.)

Constitution and Legislation Top Priority

13. (C) COM reinforced the message she had already passed to many ministers individually in her introductory calls - that completion of the Constitution and the Ahtisaari legislation were of paramount importance to Kosovo's future, and that

both the Government and the Assembly had responsibility for ensuring their passage. She urged every ministry with responsibility for legislation to make this its first priority and immediately identify a point of contact who would be dedicated to organizing work on the legislation. Both COM and ICOPT head Jonas Jonsson underscored the importance of getting the Constitution and legislation done as a proof of Kosovo's readiness to govern all of its citizens fairly and transparently, and to demonstrate a special commitment to its minority communities, both Serb and non-Serb. Both noted that this process depended on cooperation among all political parties, in the Government and in the opposition, and the inclusion of Serb and other minority communities.

14. (C) To assist the newly-appointed ministers, Jonsson gave a powerpoint presentation (e-mailed to EUR/SCE) that explained in detail the Ahtisaari process -- including a flowchart that spelled out how this legislation would be dealt with and a breakdown of which ministries had responsibility for which laws, and where each piece of draft legislation stood in the process. He and COM made clear that Ahtisaari laws would not be treated as normal legislation, to be debated and reviewed for a lengthy period by parliamentarians, but would be presented to the Assembly as a package for an up-or-down vote soon after resolution of final status. Both noted that debate and discussion over these laws would take place within the Ahtisaari and Constitution working groups, made up of Government, opposition and minority community representatives, so by the time they came to the Assembly floor, all that would be needed would be final approval.

PRISTINA 00000037 002 OF 002

Ministers Voice Support

15. (C) Ministers were given the opportunity to address the session and, almost to a person, expressed full support for the Ahtisaari Plan and the need to finalize drafting of the Constitution and the Ahtisaari laws. One out-of-synch intervention came from Nenad Rasic, the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare and one of two Kosovo Serb ministers in the government, who used his floor time to urge "compromise" between Belgrade and Pristina on the status question. The rest of the Ministers listened politely and when he had finished, Deputy PM Kuci thanked him for his comments and passed the floor to the next minister. In contrast, the other Serb member of the Government, Boban Stankovic, Minister for Returns and Communities, expressed his confidence that the current Government would be more successful than the previous one, and that since he belonged to a Serb party which had declared it would participate in all Kosovo institutions, he was prepared to do his part to fulfill his duties. He acknowledged that his was a difficult task, but he would work to bring home Serbs who had left and to protect their interests and those of other minorities in Kosovo.

16. (C) COMMENT: This meeting was successful in several ways. With both President Sejdiu and Assembly President Krasniqi in attendance, PM Thaci's new ministers expressed their full support for making a top priority the finalization of the Constitution and the legislation needed to implement the Ahtisaari Plan. They understood that these laws would have to be dealt with in a special manner that made certain the opposition and minority communities were included. The joint presentation by USOP and ICOPT also sent a clear message to all that the U.S. and EU are united and intimately engaged in developing and moving these two priority tasks forward, so that the PISG can demonstrate its commitment to protecting its most vulnerable communities and, by so doing, garner recognition by European and other states. END COMMENT.
KAIDANOW